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SCA FOR A/S ROCCA AND DAS GASTRIGHT, EUR FOR DAS BRYZA,  
SCA/CEN FOR PERRY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2016

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SUBJECT: MESSAGE TO NIYAZOV ON TURKMEN GAS

REF: SECSTATE 26183

Classified By: Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. ( SBU) Unfortunately, the reftel talking points arrived after Miller and his delegation did. It seemed unlikely we would be able to approach President Niyazov, who was fully engaged in opening ceremonies/speeches connected with the upcoming holiday. After the speech he delivered at the new Ministry of Textiles, Ambassador waved at him, caught his eye, and was invited on stage to shake his hand. Taking advantage of the opportunity, she told Niyazov (in full view, if not hearing, of the Miller delegation, with whom he was meeting immediately afterwards) that she had just received a message of support from Washington for Turkmenistan's efforts to diversify its exports routes. She delivered the fuller version of the points orally to the Foreign Minister immediately afterwards, who promised to pass them to Niyazov in the few minutes remaining before the meeting. Post delivered a written, translated version of the points to the MFA later.

¶2. ( C ) Comment: During his speech at the textile ministry, Niyazov had publicly told Miller, who was sitting in the audience, they would be discussing "new volumes, new prices, new arrangements" for the sale of Turkmen gas to Russia. He also noted that he would be meeting with the Ukrainian delegation two hours later, and spoke positively about the work of the Ministerial-level meetings this week on the Trans-Afghan pipeline. It remains to be seen whether international support for other export options will lead Niyazov to keep his options open during his meetings with Gazprom, or simply serve as a bargaining chip to drive up the price he gets.

JACOBSON